**Believe it or not: Teens, parents getting along better**

**Improved ties come at time when families have more pressure on them, expert says**

By Misty Harris, Canwest News ServiceMay 12, 2009

 You might not see the evidence in your own household, but a new national study says teens are experiencing better ties with their parents "than any teen cohort in the past 30 years."

Nine in 10 young people say their mothers carry a high level of influence on their lives, while more than eight in 10 say the same of their fathers.

Both are up about 10 percentage points since the 1980s, according to data on some 5,500 teens released today by University of Lethbridge sociologist Reginald Bibby.

Weekly arguments are down from 52 per cent a decade ago to 42 per cent, the survey shows. Teens are also reporting a greater degree of understanding between themselves and their parents: just 39 per cent are troubled about not being understood, compared to 58 per cent in 1992.

Close to 80 per cent of youth are receiving high levels of enjoyment from their mothers -- up from around 70 per cent in 1992 and 2000. With dads, the enjoyment level has likewise climbed about 10 points to its current level of 75 per cent.

"The enjoyment of parents is correlated with a number of things, including the influence that parents have on teens' lives: as enjoyment increases, so does influence. The same is true of the relationship between enjoyment and the extent to which teens turn to moms and dads when they are facing serious problems," says Bibby, author of the new book The Emerging Millennials, and one of Canada's leading trackers of demographic trends.

Ironically, these improved parental ties come at a time when families have more pressure on them than ever, with the proportion of women employed outside the home having jumped from roughly 30 per cent to 60 per cent since 1960.

"Moms and dads are doing a much better job of striking a balance between careers and family life," says Bibby. "As they've grown up, they've really learned a lot about what they want, and don't want."

Calgary's Don Procyk says "without question" the relationship he has with his two sons is closer than the one he shared with his own parents as a teenager.

"I had a good life with them, but I certainly didn't have the attention from them growing up that we've afforded our own kids," says Procyk, a private investigator.

"There are a lot of things that can go wrong (with teens). But one thing I know for sure is that if you're paying attention, it's going to be a whole lot better for everybody."

In Kincardine, Ont., Erica Milley, 17, says the freedom she's granted by her divorced parents ("they let me go out when I want, where I want") diminishes any desire to rebel. But she says they respect her more than she respects them, and confesses to hiding things from her mother even if they seem unimportant.

"I don't think (young people) are changing their behaviour. I think the behaviour is going underground," says Milley.

Bibby, however, stands by his findings. "I'm not naive about teenagers ... We haven't reached Utopia here," he says. "But amongst some, there will always be an immediate defensive reaction if someone says, 'You're looking good, give your mom and dad a lot of credit.' The fact of the matter is that that's the reality, whether they like it or not."

The margin of error for a representative sample of this size is plus or minus three percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

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Questions:

1. What is the overall trend(s)?
2. What is this trend due to, according to sociologist Reginald Bibby?
3. After having studied the changes is parent-child relationships, what other factors could contribute to this trend?
4. Which theoretical perspectives could be used to analyze this trend? Explain.